

Remarks at Focus: HOPE in Detroit, Michigan

March 13, 1994

Thank you so much, Father, Eleanor, Donald, ladies and gentlemen, for welcoming me here and introducing me to Focus: HOPE. I have met your ambassadors to the world, Father Cunningham, and Donald is a great ambassador for you. Where did he go? Is he hiding? You would have been so proud of him in Washington, speaking about you to the whole country. He was terrific. Thank you, Congresswoman Collins, for welcoming me and my good friend Senator Levin. I think if I had not come here to Focus: HOPE, he never would have cast a single vote for me again in the United States—[laughter]. You know, all of us are obsessed by something or another in life; it's a good thing to be obsessed by something good and noble. Carl Levin is obsessed with Focus: HOPE, in the best possible way.

The best tribute I can think of is to look around this room. We have two United States Senators, Governor Engler, Mayor Archer, all these Congressmen here, Chairman Dingell, Congressman Conyers, Congressman Barcia, Congressman Bonior, Congressman Kildee, Congressman Sandy Levin—I think that's everybody. And then we have the Secretary of Labor, Bob Reich, and the Secretary of Commerce, Ron Brown, which represent two of the three Departments, along with the Department of Defense, that have made direct investments in Focus: HOPE. This is a great tribute to this work. But the most important thing I want to say to you is that you heard Donald read the creed of Focus: HOPE, which was forged 26 years ago this week, on March 8th, 1968, and it sounds as if it could have been written yesterday, doesn't it?

I guess I have spent as much time in manufacturing facilities of various sorts as any person who ever occupied the Presidency, because I was a Governor for 12 years, I had to do that. I have never been in a place as advanced, as upbeat, as hopeful as this place. And I can tell you, when we were pulling in here today, I was talking to Senator Riegle and Senator Levin—we were in the car together—and Carl looked at me, and he said,

"This is what you ran for President to do, 'focus hope.' This is what you wanted to bring to the entire country. You are going in to see why you wanted to be President of the United States."

I think all of you know that I am here, along with the leaders of six of the other world's great industrial powers, to talk about the jobs crisis in the advanced economies. In every wealthy country now, there is difficulty creating new jobs. The United States has the lowest unemployment rate of all the so-called G-7 advanced industrial nations. In every advanced economy now, there are problems rewarding work with higher wages year-in and year-out, and many, many people are stuck with wages that do not go up, even when they work harder. And we are looking for answers to unlock this. We're looking for ways that we can work together to create more opportunity for people like you.

But you know and I know that no matter what policies we pursue in Washington or around the world, unless people are trained, unless they have a skill that enables them to compete and win in the global economy, to produce a high-quality, world-class product or service, nothing the Government can do will make any difference. What you are doing is guaranteeing America's security here and America's future by guaranteeing your own.

I want you to be proud of that. I also want everybody in America to see you. Here we are, in an inner-city neighborhood, with building after building of plants that were closed down, which could have become a symbol for the loss of hope, which could have become yet another excuse for why people can't make it if they are poor or if they are minorities or if they are women or if they've been on welfare or if this or if that or if the other thing. And instead of saying if, this is a place that says when: When you work, when you learn, you can do, you can have a future.

And this makes the point, for all the problems with this world that we're living in, if you know how to do something and you're good at it, no one can take that away from you, and you can be rewarded for that. And you have proven if those skills can be acquired and that talent can be demonstrated, without regard to race or gender or income

or background, if only we will give everybody a chance and invest in the future of the American people, this model here could be seen sweeping across America if we had the kind of local leadership that is manifest here by the stunning examples of Father Cunningham and Eleanor Josaitis and if we had the kind of help you've had here from the private sector to work with Government in a partnership. There is not enough Government money in the world to create these opportunities without a partnership. But if we can do this here, we can do it anywhere. And if here, if here you can be the best in the world, then America can be the best in the world everywhere. That is our mission, all of us, to be that.

I just want you to know that I got a lot more out of seeing you today than you did out of seeing me. I got fresh, clear, strong evidence to prove what I have always believed, that if we could get rid of all these hangups we've got in this country, if we could stop majoring in the minors and minoring in the majors and start thinking about what is really important, if we could really believe that all people are created equal and that people can do anything, if we could remember that the purpose of coming together is to get people together to share beliefs, to share convictions, and to get things done, then we would be able to revolutionize this whole country. If it can happen in these few square blocks of Detroit, my fellow Americans, can it not happen throughout our country? I believe it can.

So I want you to know you have inspired me, and I will talk about you all across this country. I remember I used to say, when I was running for President, because of the little town that I was born in, that I still believed in a place called Hope. And now I can say I also believe in a place called Focus: HOPE.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:39 p.m. at the Advance Technology Center. In his remarks, he referred to Father William Cunningham, director; Eleanor Josaitis, associate director; and Donald Hutchinson, student, Focus: HOPE.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Group of Seven Ministers in Detroit

March 14, 1994

Interest Rates

Q. Mr. President, do you think rising interest rates are hurting the U.S. economic recovery?

The President. I don't think we can say that for sure yet. They were bound to go up some after the fourth quarter growth figure came in; we had the highest growth rate in a decade. But I think that since there's no inflation in the economy, interest rates should not continue to go up. We'll see. If they moderate, tail off, then we'll be all right.

China

Q. Is the U.S., Mr. President, backing away from its human rights stand in terms of MFN for China?

The President. I was disappointed at the results of the meeting with the Secretary of State. And our policy is the same. We'll just have to wait and see what happens between now and June. I'll make a judgment at the appropriate time.

NOTE: The exchange began at 9:25 a.m. at the Westin Hotel. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks at the Group of Seven Jobs Conference in Detroit

March 14, 1994

Thank you very much, Mr. Vice President, for your remarks and your wonderful service and for your commitment to this project. The Vice President will be here for the entire day and a half, working with the distinguished ministers from other countries as well as our own Cabinet members and other leaders here in America.

I want to thank the State of Michigan and the congressional delegation and the city of Detroit. You know, it is true that the Mayor runs faster in the morning than the President and the Vice President do. [Laughter] He took us out to Belle Isle; I made him quit after 3 miles. And if that weren't enough indignity, I got back to the hotel room, and